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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS SECRETARY GOLLEDGE CELEBRATES \$1.5 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR WORCESTER PARKS PROJECTS

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) Secretary Robert W. Golledge, Jr. today celebrated his Office's recent award of \$1.5 million in Self-Help and Urban Self-Help grants to the City of Worcester for three open space projects, including renovations to Winslow Park and Rockwood Field, and acquisition of the Ball property. EOEA's Self-Help and Urban Self-Help grant programs assist communities in protecting land for recreational use or natural resource protection and in improving existing recreational resources.

"I am pleased EOEA has awarded \$1.5 million to the City of Worcester. Through the support of the Self-Help and Urban Self-Help grant programs and the collaborative efforts of their partnering organizations, Worcester will see these three properties greatly improved," said Golledge. "These renovations are an excellent example of EOEA's Smart Growth Initiative."

"Worcester's wonderful park system adds immeasurably to the quality of life for our residents. The allocation of this funding will assist the City of Worcester in enhancing three of our parks: Winslow Park, Rockwood Field, and the extraordinary environmental asset we have at Broad Meadow Brook Sanctuary, and we are grateful for the commitment the state has made to this endeavor," said Worcester Mayor Timothy P. Murray.

"Our City places tremendous value in our parks and open space and the great news is we are growing greener every day," said Worcester City Manager Michael V. O'Brien. "These three projects and the partners that came together to reinvest millions in these jewels are a testament to these principles and I am grateful for the support of Secretary Golledge and the Commonwealth's Urban and Self-Help Programs, the work of our State House Delegation and so many that made these projects possible. These will be positive legacies of which we have every right to be proud,"

"I am very pleased that these important projects received this much-deserved funding, and I applaud the applicants as well as everyone at Environmental Affairs for their commitment to Worcester," said Chandler.

The first of three grants to the city, EOEA awarded \$500,000 in Urban Self-Help funds for the Winslow Park project which will create a new park in the Pleasant Street Neighborhood, including a large gathering area, a play area, space for community art, gardens, and a location for a memorial for neighborhood victims of violence. Partners in the collaboration working on Winslow Park include Women Together, the City of Worcester, the Greater Worcester Land Trust, the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and the Conway School of Landscape Design.

“Women Together started dreaming of creating a park on this empty lot a year and half ago,” said Mary Keefe of The Network Center and Women Together. We knew the challenge was big but we also knew that we as women could create positive signs to show the greatness of our community. Creating this park is part of our effort to move away from the violence that has dragged down our neighborhood. It has been a great experience involving so many neighbors. Our big lesson has been ‘dare to dream!’”

“The Trust for Public Land is delighted to be at Winslow Street today to thank EOEA for its demonstrated commitment to its urban citizens by making these significant grants in Worcester. Both TPL and UEI believe that having enough accessible open space is a hallmark of sustainable, livable communities. This work is central to TPL’s Parks for People Program and our Worcester County Conservation Initiative, which seek to pursue opportunities for park creation and open space protection in all of Worcester County,” said Whitney Hatch, vice president and regional director of The Trust for Public Land.

“The Urban Ecology Institute would like to thank our local partners for their participation and leadership in making these projects possible. Healthy and sustainable urban ecosystems require the kind of leadership and initiative that are evident in this great city,” said Aaron Toffler, director of the Natural Cities Program at the Urban Ecology Institute. “We look forward to continuing our work with local groups to identify ecologically and socially significant urban sites in other communities.”

As the second largest city in Massachusetts and a centrally-located service hub, Worcester was chosen as the first city for TPL and UEI to pilot the Urban Conservation and Open Space Initiative. With development that is dense in the center and more expansive on the edges, Worcester is like many Massachusetts cities, balancing the needs and opportunities for open space, recreation areas, and ecological protection for all regions of a city.

The Winslow Park project in particular was highlighted in the Urban Conservation and Open Space Pilot Initiative, an open space analysis performed by EOEA in Cooperation with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Urban Ecology Institute (UEI).

Secretary Gollidge hopes the new tools developed by the Pilot Initiative will eventually be incorporated into municipalities’ Open Space and Recreation Plans, which must be completed every five years to be eligible for the Self-Help and Urban Self-Help grants.

The study used two innovative processes—Greenprinting, developed by TPL, and the Natural Cities Process, developed by UEI—to develop a new model that helped Worcester determine which projects should apply for the Urban Self-Help Grant. TPL and UEI piloted the new model in Lawrence, Holyoke, Somerville, and Fall River, as well. Additional funding for the Pilot Initiative came from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust and the West Hill Foundation for Nature, as well as partial funding from Worcester foundations including The Fletcher Foundation, The George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation, and The Stoddard Foundation.

The second Worcester project that was also awarded \$500,000 through an Urban Self-Help grant will renovate Rockwood Field. The project is collaboration between the City of Worcester and EOE. Renovations will include the softball field, improving the Little League fields, adding walking paths, benches, a new ADA-accessible parking lot, utility upgrades, trees, and signage.

The third project, acquisition of the Ball property, was awarded \$500,000 through a Self-Help grant. The City of Worcester working with Mass Audubon and EOE will add 15.1 acres to the Broad Meadow Brook Sanctuary. This property includes “core” habitat for rare species within the city and links to 400 acres of already protected open space. Mass Audubon and the Greater Worcester Land Trust together will hold a Conservation Restriction protecting the land from future development.

This year, through the Self-Help and Urban Self-Help Grant Programs, EOE has been able to provide \$11.8 million in funding for 33 communities across the Commonwealth.

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